

# Fact Check – Shadowland’s *The Lifespan of a Fact* is Truthfully, Well-Done

A Review for *Aisle Seat* by Lori Schneider

In the search for truth, can anyone claim for an instant that *facts* are negotiable? Is factual proof the only yardstick of truth? Or, is there *in fact*, a poetry, a rhythm of truth that speaks to a deeper or at least a different honesty? In *The Lifespan of a Fact* by Jeremy Kareken & David Murrell and Gordon Farrell, this question of truth vs. fact comes into play. Shadowland’s honestly staged, passionately acted production, based upon a true story and the book by John D’Agata and Jim Finegal is Theatre that makes an audience think; makes them feel. It’s everything good Theatre ought to be.

A fledgling Journalist/Fact Checker and a renowned Essayist who’s been “known to take his little liberties” get thrown together by the Editor of a failing magazine who has assigned the task of a time-sensitive fact-checking of the author’s latest essay to the ambitious, young intern. Editor, Emily Penrose (Kathy McCafferty) is officiously intent on saving the collapsing publication she’s overseen for years and sees the essay in question as her Legacy piece – the ticket toward that end. Enter eager, boyish Jim Fingal (Logan Marks) who she instructs to utilize the five days until print deadline to check the rational

details of the piece. She’s giving him the chance to prove himself. But when he truly takes his mission to heart, curmudgeon, John D’Agata (Steve Brady) adamantly refuses to budge on any of a myriad of unsubstantiated, questionable ‘facts.’

The well-written script is in good hands under the caring direction of Brendan Burke whose fingerprints are all over the rich detail of this beautifully staged show. The skilled actors interact naturally and wholly embrace every truth of their characters – filled with strong subtext.

Kathy McCafferty is equally at home with the humor and gripping drama her role demands. She turns in a riveting performance. Logan Marks is like a gangly colt – his earnest, youthful gusto translates to wonderful facial expressions and physical comedy and a true passion for “the truth.” Steve Brady delivers a quiet, powerful, unrelenting D’Agata with gorgeous moments as he defends his poetic truths. The three are perfectly matched; their pacing, their silences, their dynamic with one another; just brilliant. Bravo!

Costume Design by Christina English pays attention to lovely,

subtle details (Jim’s preppy-turned-rumpled look as the days leading up to the deadline progress) further the progression of the story. Projection Design (Jeff Knapp) might have been better served by a larger, lower display that wasn’t projected across the wrinkle where the two sides of the curtain came together - a bit distracting. While the program doesn’t indicate a Scenic Designer, the starkness of Emily’s office is offset nicely by the interesting details of John’s eclectically furnished home.

What is the final measure of truth? You decide. *The Lifespan of a Fact* runs through October 23rd with performances Thursdays thru Saturdays at 8 pm and Sundays at 2 pm at Shadowland Stages, 157 Canal Street, Ellenville. Information - (845) 647-5511 [www.shadowlandstages.org](http://www.shadowlandstages.org)



Lori Schneider has been involved in local theatre for nearly four decades as an actress and director. She has written theatre reviews for the Catskill Chronicle and the Times Herald Record. *Aisle Seat* adds another, independent voice to reviews in and around the Catskills and Hudson Valley, NY. If your company would like a review, contact Lori via *Aisle Seat* Messenger.